

Similar beliefs as to the annual return of the dead  
sur- Feast c  
vive to this day in many parts of Europe and find  
expression ^U^B  
in similar customs. The day of the dead or of All  
Souls, and oti  
as we call it, is commonly the second of November.  
Thus p^nce  
in Lower Brittany the souls of the departed come to  
visit  
the living on the eve of that day. After vespers are  
over,  
the priests and choir walk in procession, " the  
procession of  
the charnel-house/<sup>11</sup> chanting a weird dirge In the  
Breton  
tongue. Then the people go home, gather round  
the fire,  
and talk of the departed. The housewife covers the  
kitchen  
table with a white cloth, sets out cider, curds<sub>s</sub> and hot  
pan-  
cakes on it, and retires with the family to rest. The  
fire on  
the hearth is kept up by a huge log known as " the  
log of  
the dead" (*kef ann Anaon*). Soon doleful voices  
outside in  
the darkness break the stillness of night. It is the "  
singers  
of death " who go about the streets waking the  
sleepers by  
a wild and melancholy song, in which they remind  
the  
living in their comfortable beds to pray for the poor  
souls  
in pain. All that night the dead warm themselves at  
the  
hearth and feast on the viands prepared for them.  
Some-  
times the awe-struck listeners hear the stools  
creaking in  
the kitchen, or the dead leaves outside rustling  
under the  
ghostly footsteps.<sup>1</sup> In the Vosges Mountains on All  
Souls'  
Eve the solemn sound of the church bells invites  
good  
Christians to pray for the repose of the dead.  
While the  
bells are ringing, it is customary in some families to  
uncover  
the beds and open the windows, doubtless in order to  
let the  
poor souls enter and rest. No one that evening  
would dare

to remain deaf to the appeal of the bells. The prayers  
are  
prolonged to a late hour of the night. When the last  
*De profundis* has been uttered, the head of the family  
gently  
covers up the beds, sprinkles them with holy  
water,  
shuts the windows. In some villages fire is kept up  
on  
the  
hearth and a basket of nuts is placed beside it for  
the  
use  
of the ghosts.<sup>2</sup> Again, in some parts of Saintonge  
and  
Aunis a Candlemas candle used to be lit before the  
domestic

<sup>1</sup> A. le Braz, *La Légende de la Mortencan*, 1883-1887), ii/ 283 sqq.  
*Basse-Bretagne* (Paris, 1893), pp. 280-<sup>2</sup> L. F. Sauve, *Le folklore des*  
287. Compare J. Lecoeur, *Esquisses Hautes-Vosges* (Paris, 1889),  
pp. 295  
*du Bocage Normand* (Conde-sur-Noir-  
sg.